



ASIA/SYRIA - Bishops kidnapped: yesterday's news on their release proved wrong

Aleppo (Agenzia Fides). The news spread yesterday on the release of the two bishops in Aleppo kidnapped the night before have no certain and definite confirmation. The Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch confirms to Fides Agency that the bishops have not yet been released and that their long-awaited release could take place in Aleppo or Damascus.

An authoritative source of Aleppo, contacted by Fides Agency, reported that for the Christian communities of Aleppo yesterday the day ended with a sense of anguish and frustration because the voices concerning a solution to the case had not found credible evidence until late in the evening, despite the news on the release of the two bishops had already been released by agencies and television and radio networks around the world. "Yesterday, at around 4.30 p.m.," the source confides to Fides, that asked to remain anonymous also in view of the delicate moment lived by the Christian communities in the city - rumors that the two bishops had been freed and were returning to Aleppo had been spread. People came running in front of the Greek-Orthodox cathedral and that of the Syrian Orthodox. I also went to bring my solidarity to our brother priests of the Greek-Orthodox Church. But there was no trace of the two bishops, and when night fell everyone wet back to their homes. It was for everyone a bad shot, a disappointed hope." The authoritative source speaks of "media game" to describe the mechanism that happened yesterday throughout the world with regards to the unverified news of the release of the two bishops. The two bishops kidnapped are senior representatives of the respective Christian communities. The metropolitan Greek Orthodox Boulos al-Yazigi - brother of the current Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch Yohanna X - has long been a member of the mixed Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. Even the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim is known for his ecumenical commitment.

The kidnapping took place in the region between Aleppo and the border with Turkey. The car on which the two bishops were traveling was stopped by the group of kidnappers and the driver was shot with a blow to the head, after his attempt to escape. We are talking about Fathallah, a Catholic of the Latin Rite, father of three children. Today, in Aleppo, his funeral will be held. There was also the seventy-year-old Fouad Elias in the car. He, too, until last night, had not returned to Aleppo.

Also the matrix of the group of abductors remains uncertain. Voices so far unverified attribute the kidnapping to the Islamists of Al-Nusra Front or a brigade of Chechen militants. The Syrian opposition coalition accuses the Assad regime of having a role in the kidnapping of the two bishops. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 24/04/2013).